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North American Journal of Numismatics

IN THIS ISSUE

SASSANIAN COINS AND KINGS: VARAHRAN I
Raymond J. Hebert
SOTER THE GREAT: THE LAST OF THE INDO–GREEK KINGS *Al. N. Oikonomides*

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A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHERS

Dear Reader,

Since 1965 when we undertook the publication of the NAJN (Turtle), the prices of ancient and medieval coins have continuously gone up as anyone can see from price list comparisons. The cost of living has also gone up (from food to bus-fares!). Salaries are not what they were, nor are the costs of printing and paper – yet the cost of the NAJN has remained the same to this very date.

We have done everything we could to maintain the lowest possible costs and to prevent the present message from becoming necessary, but the deficit in the NAJN budget has become such that publication dates have had to be put off to the extent that now six months backlog has accumulated. We know that our readers fear that the journal will cease to be published, yet we are unable to catch up because of time and budget limitations.

What must be done? Should publication be stopped as in the case of theWhitman Numismatic Journal? Or should the NAJN be saved? The letters we have received say, "Save it, at any cost." And our accountants say, "It must be self-sustaining by increasing the subscription costs, or you cannot publish it any longer." And what about the six issues now due to our subscribers?

This is the solution which we have found, and we hope it will be acceptable to our subscribers so that we can continue publication on a more regular basis.

1. Vol.7, 1968 will be considered complete with No. 6 (June 1968 printed October 1968). A table of contents will be issued and distributed gratis to all subscribers so volumes may be bound.

2. Vol. 8, 1969 begins with this issue. The subscription price is now $ 6.00 per year. Subscribers who began their subscriptions late in 1968 will receive an automatic credit of 33c per issue not received in 1968, to be applied to their 1969 subscription. The billing date for all subscriptions, old and new, will henceforth be January 1 each year. Subscribers entering orders mid-year will receive back issues of the year so as to have complete volumes. This will also eliminate considerable bookeeping costs.

3. Gift subscriptions for friends of current subscribers are available to each member for $ 3.00 each when he renews his own subscription.
4. The date of publication for every issue of 1969, effective February, will be approximately the 20th of the month. Twelve issues are expected in 1969.

Please complete the subscription form received with this issue so we can start on a new and firm footing with complete, accurate records. With your help we shall try to keep an internationally praised numismatic journal alive. Not only will the publishers be grateful for your support, but so will the other subscribers of the NAJN.

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NOTES ON SASSANIAN COINS AND KINGS
VARAHRAN I

by RAYMOND J. HEBERT

Varahran I was the son of Ardashir I and the brother of Shapur I. Very little is known about his reign which was short, lasting from 273-276 A.D. Because of his short reign his coins are rare. In Islamic sources he is known as Bahram.

Judging from what is known, he was not a man of great abilities, because when the Roman Aurelian attacked Zenobia, instead of helping her with all his forces, as wisdom would have dictated, he sent her a token force, and so allowed the valuable buffer state of Palmyra to be destroyed. Realizing that he had angered the Romans, he sent them an embassy laden with valuable gifts, including figured purple cloth which was so rich in texture that the Imperial purple of Rome looked cheap when placed nex t to it.

Undoubtedly Aurelian would have attacked him and conquered him the following year except that he was assassinated as a result of a conspiracy. Varahran I died not long afterwards.

His coins are distinctive. On the obverse we see the bust of the king to the right, with a long beard and hair plaited in the Parthian style. He is wearing a crown of five points surmounted by a globe decorated with trios of pearls. From the back rgere flutter ribbons. Over his ears he wears a cheekpiece. Beginning in the fourth quadrant and reading counterclockwise into the first quadrant is a Pahlevi legend containing his name and his titles (MZDYSN BGY VRHR'N MLK'N MLK' 'YR'N W 'NYR'N MNCHTRY MN YZD'N ("Mazda - worshipper, divine being,

Varahran, king of kings, of Iran and non-Iran, of divine origin from the gods"). All this is contained within a circle of dots.

On the reverse there is a fire altar to the right and left of which are two standing figures averted from the altar, the left one being the king, and the right one being an attendant, perhaps the chief mobadh. The fire altar is made of three slabs, its shaft of four slabs, and the base of one slab. To the right of the king is the Aramaic legend NWR'ZY ("the fire of . . ."), and to the left of the attendant the name of the king VRHR'N.

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SOTER THE GREAT
THE LAST OF THE INDO-GREEK KINGS

AL. N. OIKONOMIDES

In the field of Greek numismatic epigraphy, there are not many puzzling inscriptions. With the exception of the abbreviations for ethnics which may sometimes confuse one as to which Greek city actually struck a coin from the many with the same initial or first letters, the Hellenistic period offers only one basic problem – the meaning of the ligatures or monograms and the fact that more than one king had the same name. However, a few Hellenistic coin inscriptions and several of the Greek Imperial period do require further study and historical interpretation and two of the most important of these belong to the Indo-Greek series and are the subject of the present article.

HERMAIOS AND THE "MYSTERIOUS" ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΤ INSCRIPTION

In all the published efforts to date attempting to reconstruct the history of the Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek dynasties on the basis of numismatic evidence, the name of Hermaios appears last on the list. The reason for this is simple, for it is based on a coin inscription attesting to the fact that Hermaios recognized the sovereignty of Kadphises I (the "Kiu-tsiu-Kio" of the Chinese annalists) who led the Kushanas to the conquest of the Indo-Greek kingdoms.[1] Different interpretations have been proposed relative to this 'conquest,' as to whether the Kushanas or the Pahlavas were the conquerors[2], but the fact remains that Hermaios, due to his epigraphic relation with Kadphises I, is considered by all numismatists and historians to be the last of the Indo-Greek kings.

An interesting detail is, I believe, that the coin inscription of Hermaios on the issue connecting him with Kadphises I belongs to the irregular ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΤ formula, the meaning of which has not been interpreted yet in a satisfactory way, despite many efforts.[3]

In order to speak about the 'irregular' formula of this inscription, it is wise to specify at this point its differences from the 'regular' formula.

Regular Formula:
Obv. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ
Rev. Maharajasa tratarasa Heramaysa
Irregular Formulas A and B:
Obv. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΥ (below) ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ

Rev. Maharajasa mahatasa Heramayasa or *Maharajasa rajarajasa mahatasa Heramayasa*

It will be observed that in the regular formula, the genitive of the epithet ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ is exactly translated with the genitive of the equivalent Prakrit epithet *tratarasa.* However, in the irregular formula the ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΥ corresponds to the genitive of the Prakrit epithet *mahatasa* which, as we know from other coin inscriptions of the Indo-Greek Kings corresponds to the Greek epithet ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ (Great) in the first version of the Prakrit inscription and *Rajarajasa mahatasa* in the second, which corresponds to the Greek epithets ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ. The key to the understanding of the two variations between the Greek and the Prakrit coin inscriptions of the irregular formula is a third variation which has, until now, been classified with the coins of the Kushanas under Kadphises I.

Irregular Formula C:

Obv. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΥ (below) ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ

Rev. Kujula Kasasa Kushana ya[vugasa dhramathidasa]

The English translation of the Prakrit inscription of irregular formula C is very interesting because it makes obvious the fact that in the ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΥ series using the name of Hermaios, it is not necessary to consider the Greek text as the translation of the Prakrit or vice versa.

"Kujula Kadphises, chief (Yavuga) of the Kushanas, devoted to religion."

From this third variation it is easy to assume that the Prakrit inscription on all three variations of the ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΥ series indicates

something different from the Greek one. If it is sovereignty, as Cunningham[4] thought, or a type of alliance (marital, etc.) as other scholars have thought, it is not a crucial point, at least at present. What is crucial is that it belongs *to a ruler different from the ruler indicated in the coin inscription of the obverse.*

Of course, before the reader accepts this deduction that both in the regular formula and in variations A and B of the irregular, the name of Hermaios appears both in the Greek and in the Prakrit coin inscriptions. The key, of course, is the meaning of the presently difficult to understand ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΥ and the portrait of the king, which, no matter how barbaric as art, helps to distinguish it from other portraits of Hermaios. Bachhofer appears to be the first to observe that the portraits of Hermaios "permit one to follow him from youth to old age, though they gradually lose in quality."[5] The coin portraits selected for Plate XXI of Lahiri's *CIGC*[6] verify Bachhofer's statement eloquently and at a glance. But when we arrive at the portraits of the "Nike"

type coins of the ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΥ series (*CIGC*, XXI, 13) or the portrait on the coin type with irregular formula C,(*BMC*, XXV, 1), no matter how bad their art, we can tell that the ruler with the square features, definitely younger than Hermaios, is in no way similar to the older man pictured on the last issues of Hermaios.

INTERPRETATION OF THE ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΥ INSCRIPTION

The correct interpretation of the inscription demands first a good understanding of its arrangement by the engraver on the obverse coin type.

The epigraphists will recognize immediately that according to the arrangement we have actually two inscriptions instead of one. The first conists of words 1, 2 and 3 and the second (obtaining a quasi-exergue position) is word 4.

The first two words are easily interpreted: Coin of Basileus Soter --. The actual difficulty comes with the third word ΣΥ which may be recognized as the prefix of a composite word which the reader of the coin inscription was assumed to know or understand from the context with the other words of the inscription.

From the fact that the regular formula of the coin inscriptions used by Hermaios has the title and the epithet preceding his name, scholars have thought the irregular formula to be a corrupt variation, definitely not one used by Hermaios himself for his mintings.[7] We are inclined to accept only the second part of this theory, because the "corruption" is by no means recognizable as such. Epigraphically we can observe the abbreviation Σ (= ΣΩ)[8] as an element which might create the idea of corruption for the numismatist and the prefix ΣΥ also contributes to this idea in its "non-interpreted" status.

The reasons for the failure to properly understand what this particular inscription says are many. The most important is the appearance of the name Hermaios, but equally misguiding are the two words following ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ and the identification of the first of these as the epithet "Saviour" used by this king. The answer is to consider the word ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ as the name of the king and to relate the prefix ΣΥ to the title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ. The interpretation resulting from this reading creates some very interesting historical implications, but agrees fully with proposals long ago accepted as sound ideas by some of the earlier scholars.

The transcription of the coin inscription according to the new way of reading is as follows:

ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ Σ(ω)ΤΗΡΟΣ ΣΥ(βασιλέως)ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ

(Coin of the) King Soter Co(regent) of King Hermaios

What we have observed above about the portrait of *someone younger than Hermaios* together with the fact that contemporary historians are convinced that the coins with the irregular formula were not struck by Hermaios himself, agree with the conclusion that in this group of coins the Prakrit coin inscription on the obverse carries the name of the Sovereign King of Kings under whose authority the Vassal King Soter struck his coinage. This deduction is especially supported by the text of the Prakrit coin inscription and the succession of two different Sovereign Kings of Kings. Hermaios first (called *Maharajasa mahatasa* or Great King and also *Maharajasa rajarajasa mahatasa* or King and Great King of Kings) and Kujula Kadphises secondly, (called *Kushana yavugasa dhramathidasa* or the Pious Chief of the Kushanasa).

Historically, the succession of the two sovereign "Kings of Kings" fits the established chronological background and the presently valid historical restoration of the events related to the last period of survival of the Indo-Greek kingdoms. But on the basis of this new interpretation, a second puzzling coin inscription of the Indo-Greek series becomes much easier to understand and interpret.

THE "NAMELESS KING" AND HIS COINAGE

Numismatists and historians, since the first attempts to draw a history of the Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythic kings of India, have been puzzled by the "problem of the nameless king." Actually the problem is how the issues of a king with a four word Greek coin inscription and a four or five word Prakrit coin inscription came to be considered as a "nameless king," when his name is more than readable on his thousands of bronze coins found "all over the Panjab, as well as in Kandahar, and in the Kabul valley."[9]

But the porblems of the "Nameless king" are not only those related to his name. He is one of the lonely figures in historical numismatics because none of his earlier identified coins indicate any association with another ruler except Wema Kadphises (the son of Kadphises I). Since this relationship is based upon a type appearing on a unique bronze coin, and only one specimen is known of his billon silver, it is quite natural that the information is not yet complete.

From the formula of the coin inscription, which by incorrect interpretation created the "Nameless King," we can now deduce

more information on the basis of the other inscriptions interpreted earlier in this paper.

Greek: (two formulas)

1. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΩΝ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ
2. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ[10]

Prakrit: (two formulas)

3. *Maharajasa rajadirajasa mahatasa tratarasa*
4. *Maharajasa rajadirajasa mahatasa tratarasa ra--*

Especially in the Greek formula (No.1), there are some epigraphical variations, most of which are due to ligatures of letters created by the die engraver (Ɛ=ΕΓ, Ⱦ=ΥΣ), but in general we may say that the expression "corrupt Greek inscription" used by some numismatists for variations of formula 1 is completely unsupported and unjust.

To my knowledge not even one of the numerous attempts at an English translation of all four formulas has even approached the correct reading. Percy Gardner (*BMC*, p.xlvii) says, "The nameless king, who calls himseld merely Soter Megas, naturally gives us no clue in his inscription to decide his affinities." Whitehead says (*PMC*, p. 160, Note 2), "The coins of Soter Megas purport to be struck by an anonymous ruler calling himself the King of Kings, the Great Saviour." and we end with a passage from the most recent numismatic work by B. Chattopadhay (*The Age of the Kushanas*,1967, p.49): "The title 'Basileus Basileon Soter Megas' used on Kadphises II's copper coins occurs as the only legend without the addition of a name."

The whole difficulty of interpretation this time lies heavily on the word ΣΩΤΗΡ. Of course, in a narrow grammatical view, it is an epithet which must be translated "Saviour." But if numismatists cared to search in epigraphical and papyrological documents, they would have found that it appears as a man's name as early as the third century B.C. (IG, VII, 387, line 1) and especially in the Hellenistic and Roman Near-East and Egypt it could not be considered an uncommon name.[11]

As a logical deduction the coin inscriptions on the issues of King Soter, until now called "The Nameless King," must be translated as follows:

Greek

1. *King Reigning, Soter the Great*
2. *King Soter*

Prakrit

1. King and Great King of Kings Soter the Great
2. King and Great King of Kings Soter the Great RA--

Hopefully historians and numismatists will not have any difficulty in recognizinf King Soter the Great as the same King Soter who earlier called himself Co-regent of Hermaios and

immediately afterward accepted as his sovereign King of Kings, Kujula Kadphises I, the Kushana invader of the Indo-Greek kingdoms. The association of King Soter also with Wema Kadphises II is quite natural and chronologically correct.

KING SOTER AND THE HISTORY OF THE INDO-GREEKS

By reconsidering the readings, translations and historical interpretations of the coin inscriptions examined in this paper, we now know some more details about the last phase of the Indo-Greek kingdoms.

Hermaios no longer appears to be the last Indo-Greek king. At the time of the invasion of the Kushanas he was either a very old man or perhaps, subdued by age, not a very active King of Kings and so ruled his kingdom by means of Vassal Kings who had the right to issue their own coinage. Some of these vassal kings could well be the Saka-Parthian rulers known from coins who, as Hermaios became weaker, or as they became stronger, did not recognize him as "King of Kings" on their coin types. His last faithful vassal king, as we now know, was Soter, who carried the title "co-regent" and recognized Hermaios as "King and Great King of Kings."

When the Kushanas invaded the Indo-Greek kingdoms, the shadow of rule by Hermaios disappeared immediately and their "Yavuga" became the "Great King of Kings" whom Soter had to accept as sovereign. But even at this phase, Soter preserved on his coinage the title "co-regent of Hermaios," possibly in an effort to indicate that he was the last direct descendant of the great dynasties of the Indo-Greek kings, a claim which must have had considerable significance for the Greek population of his kingdom.

At this point, as Von Gutschmid[12] and MacDowall[13] had already suspected, possibly due to the death of Kujula Kadphises

I, a numismatic break appears between his coinage and the coinage of his successor Wema Kadphises II. In this break the coinage of Soter with the inscription *King Reigning Soter the Great* appears as a very eloquent propaganda proclamation. Soter is now not only "Reigning king," (as opposed to co-regent or vassal king), but also, as he proclaims in Prakrit by using the early "sovereignty formula" of Hermaios, "King and Great King of Kings." His power must have been considerable by this time and the possibility that he reconquered and ruled over a large area of the earlier Indo-Greek kingdoms is eloquently supported by the vast and widespread quantities of his copper coins which have been found.

When Wema Kadphises began to rise to power, an alliance between him and Soter the Great is attested by the coin type of the Janiform bust of Soter and Wema.[14] But at this point the available numismatic sources stop giving us information. Soter the Great, the last of the Indo-Greek soldier kings who tried to restore the glorious days of his ancestors' conquests and rule, fades away with no known successors into the dark pages of lost ancient history. Wema Kadphises II, the son of the Kushana conqueror Kujula Kadphises, appears finally to have succeeded in destroying Soter, and with him the last dream of restoration to power of the Indo-Greeks.

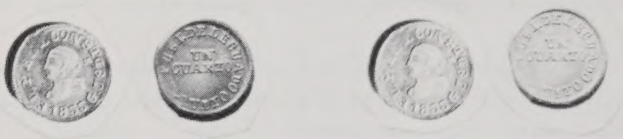
NOTES

1. Cunningham, A. *Coins of Alexander's Successors in the East* 1884 (Rp. 1968) pp. 297-298.
2. A. K. Narain. *The Indo-Greeks.* Oxford 1957. p. 162, note 6.
3. For earlier bibliography and solution proposed see: W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, 2nd ed, Cambridge 1951, Appendix 17: "The Hermaeus-Kujula Kadphises Coins," pp. 503-507. Also A. K. Narain, *op. cit.* p. 161 and B. Chattopadhay, *The Age of the Kushanas*, Calcutta 1967, pp. 18-36.
4. Cunningham, *op. cit.* p.303; Narain, *op. cit.* pp. 161-162.
5. *JAOS*, 1941, p. 239. quoted by Narain, *ibidem.*
6. A. N. Lahiri, *Corpus of Indo-Greek Coins.* Calcutta 1965.
7. J. Marshall, *JRAS* 1914, p. 981; Narain, *op. cit.* p. 161
8. The ligature Σ for Σω in the word ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ, appears earlier in the coin inscriptions of Strato I and Strato II, as well as a ligature P for PO. Cf. Narain, *The Coin Types of the Indo Greek Kings* 1955 (Rp. 1968), p. 31
9. A. Cunningham in *Numismatic Chronicle* 1890, p. 115; E. J. Rapson, *Sources of Indian History: Coins.* 1897 (Rp. 1968), pp. 16-17
10. Based upon the reading of the coin *BMC*, Pl. XXIV, 5 by B. Chattopadhay, *The Age of the Kushanas* Calcutta 1967, p. 51 (Class III).
11. (Papyri: Lips I. Lond. I. III. Oxy. I. XIV. SB II. O Strassb. O Bruss; Inscriptions: Dittb. *Sylloge* (3rd ed). Vol. II. IV).
12. Quoted by B. Chattopadhay, *op. cit.* p. 52
13. Paper on "The Date of Kanishka," quoted by B. Chattopadhay, *op. cit.* p. 53, note 95.
14. Illustrated in *Numismatic Chronicle* 1892, Pl. XV, 14

TWO UNPUBLISHED 'CUARTOS' OF ECUADOR

DALE A. SEPPA

We take great pleasure in verifying the existence of two coins which were listed as unconfirmed in Mr. Holladn Wallace's s,(WNJ) Dec. 67) article concerning earlu Ecuadorian coinage. These are the "Cuartos" of 1855 and 1856.



We have two examples of the 1855, one being an off center strike in about VG, but well tarnished with an attempted puncture. The other is Unc., but weakly struck on the reverse. Both 1855's bear identical legends: *obv.* to left EL. P. EN L CONST; to right 1855 G. J. 8 Ds and *rev.* to left REPUBL DEL ECUADO; to right QUITO and in the field, UN/CUARTO.

The example of the 1856 that we have is VF, but has rim nicks and the reverse has two small solder spots where it was attached possibly to a necklace. The legends are: *obv.* to left EL P. EN LA CONSTIT; to right G. J. 8 Ds and *rev.* to left REPUBLI DEL ECUADOR; to right QUITO, and in the field, UN/CUARTO.

To the best of my knowledge the 1856 coin is previously unpublished with the exception of Mr. Wallace's brief and unconfrimed listing. Although the 1855 coin was mentioned in the Adams catalogue of the Guttag collection and its existence is inferred by Yeoman, no information relative to the legends has been given, nor were illustrations shown.

Our agent in Quito, Senor Carlos Arroyo, informs us that he has been unable to locate any cuartos bearing either of these dates in Quito. Ecuador's foremost numismatist, Doctor Alfredo Karger is not available for comment at present, but we hope he may be able to give us some idea of the approximate mintage or some idea of the numbers extant at this date.

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